

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	David Martin
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is maintained by a nationwide independent company. The children's home accommodates four children of either sex, aged between 9 years and 17 years. The service provides medium to long term care for children with attachment disorders.

The premises provide shared space for the group, which includes lounge and diner, a second lounge, kitchen, garden and bathing facilities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This unannounced inspection was carried out to assess the home's performance against all key standards and to check progress in meeting the recommendation made in the last inspection report. Three young people were involved in the inspection.

The home continues to operate to a high standard ensuring that outcomes for young people are very positive. The young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and to eat well. There are comprehensive systems in place to ensure that young people are protected from harm. There are individual therapy programmes in place. Case recording is excellent and placement planning is thorough to ensure consistency and carefully targeted interventions from staff. The premises are well maintained and homely. Leadership of the home is strong and supportive and provides the staff with clear guidance in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Overall, the home offers young people a nurturing environment in which they can safely explore difficult issues with a caring staff team.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has responded positively to a recommendation made at the last inspection concerning the recording of medicines administered in the home. The records have been reviewed to ensure that sufficient space is allowed for date and day entries.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home actively promotes the health and well-being of the young people. Young people are all registered with primary health care providers and are well supported

when the need for checks or treatment arises. All the young people receive therapy based on an attachment model. This is undertaken at the organisation's therapy centre. The young people are accompanied by a member of staff who is involved in the session to ensure that young people are fully supported.

The home has contact with the looked after children's nurse and specialist health care is arranged as required. Occasionally this includes input from representatives of the child and adolescent mental health services. There are currently no issues relating to the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Each young person has a comprehensive health care plan setting out how their health care needs are met. The home is committed to encouraging young people to lead healthy lifestyles which includes participation in a range of sports based activities.

The young people are provided with healthy, nutritious meals. They can contribute their ideas to the weekly menu and daily choices are always available. The young people are encouraged to participate in the preparation of meals. The home celebrates a range of religious festivals and young people are supported in observing religious customs in relation to the provision of food. Mealtimes are considered to be an important social occasion and are used to discuss topics in an informal and relaxed way.

Young people's medication is stored securely and there are systems in place to ensure that it is administered safely. Improvements have been made to the documentation relating to self-medication and it is now accurate and accountable. Staff have completed first aid training ensuring that they can care for young people who have had accidents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy and dignity are respected. Bathrooms are lockable and there is access to a private telephone. Young people are encouraged to be appropriately dressed at all times. Staff have an excellent understanding as to how they manage confidential information and meet the requirements of data protection legislation. This ensures that information about young people is protected.

There is a comprehensive complaints procedure in place, which is well known by staff and young people. The young people's guide provides child-friendly guidance on how to make a complaint. Young people are also advised to contact the local children's rights service and other external agencies for further help. Records indicate that all complaints made in the period since the last inspection have been thoroughly investigated and resolved appropriately. The home treats complaints seriously ensuring that young people can raise concerns without hesitation.

Young people are safeguarded by excellent safeguarding policies and procedures. Their welfare is given high priority and safeguarding practices are regularly revisited and reviewed. The staff are trained in child protection and are very confident about

reporting any issues that arise. The local authority's safeguarding manual is available within the home to complement the home's clearly written safeguarding policies. The internal protocols have been verified by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. These measures help to protect young people from harm.

The home strongly promotes an anti-bullying culture and any incidents of bullying are addressed as and when they occur. Anti-bullying is regularly discussed with young people through house meetings and in individual sessions. There is also a good range of leaflets and books available for the young people on this issue. The home has individual risk assessments to manage incidents of unauthorised absence from the home. Frequent absence triggers a professionals' meeting to review placement arrangements and to consider alternative strategies for managing it. The home's approach makes a significant contribution to the protection of young people from harm.

The home actively promotes socially acceptable behaviour. Young people using the service are helped to appreciate this through the use of meaningful positive rewards. This means that young people receive consequences that they value and which encourage the presentation of acceptable behaviour. The consequences of any unacceptable behaviour, including, for example, a brief loss of privileges are in line with the standards and suitable for the group.

The home's policy regarding physical intervention meets the standards, and all established staff have received instruction in the safe control of challenging behaviours. The preferred model of physical intervention includes de-escalation and only uses restraint as a last resort. This meets the standards and helps to keep young people safe. The recording of restraints within the home meets the standards. A clear, factual, written account containing all of the elements required by the standards is completed for every episode of intervention within the home.

The premises are safely maintained. Environmental risk assessments are in place and no hazards were noted during the tour of the home's communal areas. Routine maintenance of fire fighting equipment and fire safety systems is up to date.

The staff are subject to periodic checks, such as three yearly clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau. This ensures that staff remain suitable to work with young people. All visitors to the home are required to sign in and must provide proof of identity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has an individual development plan which sets out how their educational, health and emotional needs will be met. There are also individual behaviour management plans in place. The case records are well maintained and provide a good foundation for young people to receive well-planned, consistent care.

The young people attend full-time education, and daily contact is maintained with the respective school networks. Comprehensive education plans and, where appropriate, statements of special educational need are held on individual case files. Home staff liaise closely with staff in class to provide a positive level of support to individuals, and promote a consistent approach to academic progress. This means that young people are encouraged and well supported to attend class, and complete their academic programmes. There are study facilities in the home for each young person including safe access to the internet. The home encourages young people to value their education.

Young people are helped to use their leisure time constructively. They are involved in organised activities in the local community and enjoy regular activities in the home. This includes trips out to places of interest and use of arts and craft facilities. Young people can also enjoy quiet time on their own if they wish. Overall, the young people are encouraged to have a positive attitude to learning and leisure.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Case records for young people are comprehensive and well maintained. Placement plans are excellent and cover all Every Child Matters outcomes. The young people are actively engaged in individual therapy sessions that help them understand their relationships, personal history and behaviour. Life story work is also undertaken. The home's approach to the delivery of personal care and support ensures consistency and promotes a sense of well-being.

Where possible, admissions to the home are planned and pre-admission visits are offered as a matter of course. Young people are involved in their review meetings and can provide written or verbal input into the decision making about their future. They are always given the opportunity to discuss their own individual circumstances with the independent reviewing officer. This ensures that young people can have their say on how they are looked after.

Contact arrangements are recorded on young people's files and take into account any restrictions as directed by the placing authority. Young people confirmed that they have contact with members of their family. The arrangements help the young people maintain meaningful relationships with key people in their lives.

The home encourages young people to have a say about the way in which the home is run. There are regular house meetings to discuss rules, plan mealtimes and organise activities. Young people are enabled to make a positive contribution to decision making.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The young people are engaged in acquiring independent living skills in accordance with their age and ability. They are all expected to keep their rooms tidy and to varying degrees are involved in shopping, laundry and the preparation of meals. As they become old enough they are referred to the appropriate social work teams to oversee their transition to adulthood. This is reflected in case files and may include detailed pathway or transition plans. Young people are well supported in developing their skills for the future.

The premises are maintained in good order. Communal rooms are well decorated and comfortably furnished. The young people's bedrooms reflect their interests and choices. The home is well designed and meets the accommodation needs of the group of young people very well. There is a wealth of space, both inside and outside the home, which benefits the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The values are embedded in the work of the home and this ensures that young people's individuality is respected. Case files clearly reflect the individuality of the young people and staff have an excellent understanding of anti-discriminatory practice.

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and is up to date and accurate. It sets out the values and arrangements for the way in which the home is run. There is a children's guide which explains the home, the rules and routines. This ensures that young people are made aware of the services they can expect.

The home has a competent, experienced staff team. The staff have childcare qualifications and access to ongoing training which ensures that their practice is up to date. They receive monthly supervision and have regular staff meetings. There are always sufficient staff on duty to ensure that young people have access to support and guidance. This ensures that young people receive care in accordance with their needs.

The home has monthly quality monitoring visits to assess activity in the home, and to identify areas for improvement. The manager also carries out internal quality assurance checks. This ensures that young people continue to receive a good service and live in a home that is safe.

There are individual case records for each young person which reflect assessed need and contain the required statutory documentation. The files are secure and maintained in good order. This ensures that information about young people can be retrieved quickly and that staff are familiar with young people's backgrounds.

